

FY 2019
SMALL NEPA PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

Please **do not leave any field BLANK**, unless it does not apply.
 Submit form (Word doc) electronically to jjchynoweth@fs.fed.us by **February 7, 2020**.

(NOTE: Italicized / red comments are for reference only. You may delete them after completing form.)

Project Name	Newsome Fuels
District Name (or "Forestwide")	Red River R.D.
County where project located?	Idaho
FS Personnel Name, Phone Number and Email <i>If a partnership, please add name, phone and email; however, an FS employee MUST BE the project proponent and point of contact.</i>	Thomas McLeod Office: 208-842-2117 Cell: 208-451-5050 Thomas.mcleod@usda.gov
Legal Location <i>Township(s), Range(s), and Section(s) of project.</i>	T 30N R 6E – Sec 25 T 30N R 7E – Sec 30 T 29N R 7E – Sec 7, 8, 9
Decision Maker's Name <i>District Ranger/Line Officer responsible for signing the decision document</i>	With Roadless – Regional Forester Without Roadless – District Ranger
Is the project associated with meeting a Forest target?	Yes – Hazardous Fuels Treatment Target CWPP designated WUI
Which CE Category does this project fit? <i>Provide citation: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(x)</i> <i>See below regarding 220.6(d)(x) projects.</i>	36 CFR 220.6 (e) (6) (ii) (iv)
At what level does the Decision Maker want the project scoped? Internal__x__ External*_TBD__ - (Will be External Scoping if there are treatments within the Roadless Area and depends on Nez Perce Tribes requirements) <i>Internal scoping will be through the Small NEPA IDT, unless otherwise specified. Scoping would be documented in the Extraordinary Circumstances Checklist.</i> <i>External scoping will be with the public via a scoping letter, a legal notice, and the scoping letter posted on the NPCWNF website. The Project will only be scoped to the Tribe(s) et al (see * below), unless otherwise specified.</i> <i>*For external scoping, please to complete block below. Provide NA if no additional publics are to be scoped.</i>	

Provide a list of the individuals, groups, agencies, etc. **(other than those listed below*)** with their mailing address and/or email address, of those who will be included for External Scoping.

- DO NOT provide only a name.
- DO NOT leave this box blank: If **no additional individuals** are to be **externally scoped** please enter **NA**.

Public for External Scoping:

U.S. Senator James E. Risch Office

Regional Director Mike Hanna
313 D Street, Suite 106
Lewiston, ID 83501
208-743-0792

** The following will be included for all SN externally scoped projects: Nez Perce Tribe, Coeur d'Alene Tribe (North Zone projects only), Friends of the Clearwater, Idaho Conservation League, American Forest Resource Council, Idaho Wildlife Federation, IDFG – Clearwater Region, Thomas E. Peterson, Bill Mulligan, Gregg Winkler, Phil/Jean Poxleitner (Red River projects only)*

Does the Decision Maker want a Legal Notice published in the Lewiston Tribune? Yes* ____ No x__

** The scoping period will start the day after the LN is published.*

What Level of Analysis (below) does the Decision Maker want for the Project?

 x **Low level:** Choose this level if the project's level of public scrutiny is expected to be relatively low or unknown. Documentation for low level analysis projects would be a completed Extraordinary Circumstances checklist filled out by the specialists, including the name of the specialist who performed the analysis, the project name, and date it was completed. No other written documentation would be generated.

 TBD **Moderate level:** Choose this level if the project's level of public scrutiny is expected to be relatively moderate to high. In this case, specialists would complete the Extraordinary Circumstances checklist with the only write up being for resources that are present and the rationale for the effects call. No write up would be given for items in the checklist that are not present.

Will Depend on Roadless Area treatments and Nez Perce Tribe

If the determination is no effect (which most CE's should have zero to very little adverse effects), then document *why* that determination was made in one paragraph or less. If the determination is an adverse effect, then *why* that determination was made would be written in less than three paragraphs.

List the Management Area(s) in which your project is located.

MA 10 – Water

MA 12 – Timber

MA 13 – Timber / Visual Quality and Sensitivity

MA 15 – Timber / Winter Range

MA 17 – Timber Visual

MA 20 – Old Growth

What are the Goals and Standards* for the Management Area(s) listed above that are *relevant to your project*?

MA 10 – Water – Manage Riparian areas to maintain and enhance their value for wildlife, fisheries and aquatic habitat, and water quality. Planned ignitions, when within prescription, will be allowed to burn to enhance resource values.

MA 12 – Timber – Manage for timber production and other multiple uses on a sustained yield basis. (Cutting less than 6" DBH in this MA. Allow for future timber harvest)

MA 13 – Timb. / Visual Quality and Sensitivity – Manage to produce sustained yields of sawtimber and other wood products while meeting the visual quality objectives or retention or partial retention. (cutting less than 6" DBH in this MA. Understory thinning)

MA 15 – Timb. / Winter Range – Manage to produce sustained yields of sawtimber and other wood products, while improving the quality of the deer and elk winter habitat. (Understory thinning and dead and down clean up / More open forest floor for browse and forage.)

MA 17 – Timber Visual – Manage for timber production within the constraints imposed by the visual quality objectives of retention or partial retention while providing for other multiple uses and resources. (Cutting less than 6" DBH in this MA. Understory thinning)

MA 20 – Old Growth –Provide "suitable" Habitat (existing and replacement) for old-growth-dependent wildlife species. (understory thinning) MA 20 located within Roadless Area.

Standard – TSI – Exclude pre-commercial thinning

** Goals and Standards are described in Chapter 3 of the Nez Perce and Clearwater Forest Plans. Include any **relevant** Forestwide Standards found in Chapter 2 of the Forest Plans as well.*

Is the project in a designated Idaho Roadless Area (IRA)? Yes* No Possibly - Depends on Meeting with Tribe / Forest Supt / Reg. Forester

If yes, which one? Silver Creek-Pilot Knob (Primitive and Special Areas of Historical or Tribal Significance)

This will depend on Tribes comfort level and if Roadless Rule will allow. Roadless area maybe dropped from proposal if policy does not allow for treatments.

* Fill in the 'Project in Roadless Area' table below, AND complete a Briefing Paper. Provide the completed Briefing Paper to the Environmental Coordinator and Brian Riggers PRIOR TO SCOPING.

Is the project in a congressionally designated area, ex. Wilderness Area, Wild & Scenic River Corridor, Research Natural Area, Historic Trail, etc.? Yes* No

If yes, which one(s)?

Along the Elk City Wagon Road. Talked with Steve Lucas. He did not see much for an issue with this.

* For projects that occur in a **Wilderness Area**, contact Carol Hennessey, carol.hennessey@usda.gov, 935-4270, BEFORE submitting this proposal, to discuss how the project may affect the designated area.

* For projects that occur in a **Wild and Scenic River Corridor**, contact Chris Noyes, chris.noyes@usda.gov, 935-4289, BEFORE submitting this proposal, to discuss how the project may affect the designated area.

* For projects that occur in a **Research Natural Area**, contact Mike Hays, mike.hays@usda.gov, 935-4285, BEFORE submitting this proposal, to discuss how the project may affect the designated area.

* For projects that occur in the **Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark**, contact Steve Lucas, steve.lucas@usda.gov, 963-4212, BEFORE submitting this proposal, to discuss how the project may affect the designated area.

Are there Floodplains or Wetlands in the project area? Yes No Possibly along Newsome Creek and other creeks / streams that feed into Newsome Creek. Most private residences reside within the drainage bottom.

Are there Municipal Watersheds in the project area? Yes No

If yes, which one?

Is the project located in an RHCA? Yes No

What is the Purpose and Need for the proposed action*?

The project objectives are to:

- Improve firefighter and public safety,
- Reduce wildfire risk to life and private property,
- Increase wildland fire suppression efficiency when in proximity to private property and structures, and
- Reduce adverse fire suppression impacts on the landscape.

The primary objective is to provide a zone of reduced fire behavior in order to meet the objectives identified above.

Implementing the fuels reduction treatments would help create conditions that limit the spread of wildfire, and provide strategic and tactical advantage for both ground-based and aerial firefighting personnel and equipment adjacent to private property. To maintain their effectiveness, the treatments need to be done on a rotational basis to assure that a low fuel loading is maintained.

Describe the Existing Conditions of the project area.

(Within Units including Roadless Area) Modeled using IFTDSS (LANDFIRE)

Adjacent to private property and structures.

Fuel Models are a set of fuelbed inputs which are used to explain the fuels characteristics that carry fire in a given environment, and used to create the predicted fire behavior of that environment.

Unit Fuel Models:

- Grass (GR2) Moderately coarse continuous grass, spread rate high, flame length moderate – 1%
- Grass (GR4) Moderately coarse continuous grass, spread rate very high, flame length high – 1%
- Grass-Shrub (GS2) Shrubs 1-3 feet high, moderate grass load, spread rate high, flame length moderate – 25%
- Timber Understory (TU1) Fuelbed low load grass/shrub with litter, spread rate low, flame length low – 18%
- Timber Understory (TU5) Fuelbed high load conifer litter with shrub, spread rate mod, flame length moderate – 52%,
- Timber Litter (TL3) Moderate load conifer litter, spread rate very low, flame length low – 1 %
- Timber Litter (TL8) Mod load and compactness, spread rate mod, flame length low – 1%

Canopy Base Height is the distance in meters from ground to start of tree canopy. The shorter the distance the more likely a fire will transfer from surface fire to crown fire.

- Canopy Base Heights in meters: < 1 – 89% >1 to < 4 – 0% > 4 – 9% Non-Forested – 2%
- Moderate to Heavy Dead and Down
- Moderate to heavy understory (ladder fuels)
- Significant amount of insect and disease present in mature and young trees, including Western Hemlock Looper affected trees.

Existing fuel profile modeling predicts hazardous wildfire behavior conditions adjacent to private property and structures, which decreases wildland fire suppression efficiencies.

Measurement indicators: Modeled using Energy Release Component (ERC) at the 97th Percentile

- Flame Length 97th Percentile: < 4 feet – 27% 4 - 8 feet – 9% > 8 feet – 64%
- Fire Type 97th Percentile: Surface Fire – 24% Passive Crown Fire – 66% Active Crown Fire – 10%

Describe the Desired Conditions of the project.

- Increase canopy base heights to 3 Meters (8-10 feet)
- Reduce the amount of Fuel Model TU5 and trend towards Fuel Models with less fuel loads and reduced fire behavior (TU1, TL3).
- Reduce dead and down material
- Reduce ladder fuels
- Fire Behavior Characteristics during backing wildfire or potential burn out operations:
 - Flame lengths < 4 Feet.
 - Fire Type: Surface Fire

Describe the Proposed Action.

What is provided will be used in the Scoping Letter (*external only*), by the resource specialists for their effects analyses, and in the Decision document.

Work can be completed by contract or with Forest Service personnel. Funding limitations will be the primary driver of who will do the work. The use of retained receipts would be the first priority for work to be completed. Next would be a stand along contract through AQM and possible use of the IDIQ for hand thinning. Last would be the use of Forest Service personnel because commitment issues may arise with wildfires. Another idea for work to be completed would be to ask the Nez Perce Tribe if they would like join in an agreement to complete the hand thinning.

Work will be done within 300 feet around the private boundaries within the Newsome Drainage. Three areas have been identified; Newsome private proper, 440A Road property, and Mud Springs property. Work will take place both inside and outside of RHCA's.

Treatments (RHCA and Non-RHCA) are also proposed within the Silver Creek-Pilot Knob Roadless Area. Inclusion in the project will depend on the Nez Perce Tribe's comfort level and if the Roadless Rule will allow. Roadless area maybe dropped from proposal if policy does not allow for treatments. If included in project, an agreement between the Nez Perce Tribe, Forest Supervisor, Regional Forester, and Roadless Commission will be in place prior to implementing the project.

The entire project is accessible via the Newsome Creek Road (FS 1858). The 440A is off the 1858 as well as the Mud Springs Property by utilizing the Road 307 to the Road 1808. Another access road off the 1858 would be the Radcliff Road (FS 1826)

Two different cutting specifications are proposed: Non-RHCA and RHCA (see Table below and on p. 13).

1. The Non-RCHA vegetation cutting specification will be to hand thin vegetation (trees) less than 6 inches Diameter at Breast Height (DBH).
2. In RHCA's the vegetation (tree) cutting specifications will be:
 - Hand thin vegetation less than 7.9" DBH and greater than 4 inches DBH at a 16 feet x 16 feet spacing.
 - Trees 3.9 inches DBH and less will be cut.
 - No Pacific Yew will be cut or pruned.
 - For tree spacing a desired trees species and desirable leave tree characteristics list will be utilized with help from Silviculture.
 - Desired tree species will be prioritized based on wildfire, insect, and disease resilience, as well as health of the young tree.
 - Stump height will be less than 6 inches and cut horizontally not to exceed thirty degrees from horizontal.

Cutting Specification	Roadless	Non-Roadless	Total Acres
RHCA	18	52	70
Non-RHCA	55	95	150
Total Acres	73	147	220

To raise canopy base heights and reduce dead and down in both RHCA treatments as well as Non-RHCA treatments:

- All leave trees will be pruned to a height of 8 feet from the ground, including the outer edge of the

List the Design Criteria / Mitigation Measures * to be included with the Proposed Action.

Archaeology

- Known historic (NRHP Eligible/historically significant) properties or sites will be avoided or protected during project implementation.
- Ground-disturbing activities would be halted if cultural resources are discovered until an Archaeologist can properly evaluate and document the resources in compliance with 36 CFR 800.

Aquatics

- Design prescribed burn projects and prescriptions to contribute to the attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives.
- Burning may occur in both streamside and landslide-prone RHCA's, with the prescribed fire planned and managed to expect the following results in the streamside RHCA:
 - No more than 5% mortality in the mature forest canopy within the streamside RHCA, with this mortality not highly concentrated.
 - Less than 5% of the streamside RHCA is burned at high severity (litter and duff consumed), with these patches not highly concentrated.

Air

- Coordinate with the North Idaho/Montana Airshed Group when prescribed burns are scheduled (minimum 24-hour notice) to ensure compliance with the Clean Air Act.

Access Management

- Close existing gates (consistent with current motor vehicle restrictions) daily during non-operating hours.

Piles

- No hand-piling or hand-pile burning within 50 feet of stream channels

*** Additional Design Criteria and any Mitigation Measures to apply to the proposed action will need to be determined by the resource specialists.** The Design Criteria and Mitigation Pick-lists are available in Pinyon at james.chynoweth Workspace/New Project – 2020 Feb 7.

Small NEPA IDT/resource specialists are listed below. Contact them if you have any questions regarding their resource for your project.

Botany – Mike Hays, mike.hays@usda.gov; 983-4028

Fisheries – Derrick Bawdon, derrick.bawdon@usda.gov; 963-4211

Heritage – Christy Mog, christy.mog@usda.gov; 935-4269

Hydrology – Cynthia Valle, cynthys.valle@usda.gov; 963-4203

Minerals – Marty Jones, martin.jones@usda.gov; 983-5158

Recreation – Carol Hennessey, cahennessey@fs.fed.us; 935-4270

Soils – Alex Rozin, alexandra.rozin@usda.gov; 842-2100

Wild and Scenic River – Chris Noyes, chris.noyes@usda.gov; 935-4251

Wildlife – Jim Lutes, james.r.lutes@usda.gov; 963-4202

Small NEPA Planner – Jeff Chynoweth, james.chynoweth@usda.gov; 935-4260

PROJECT MAPS

Please send – separate from this form and per the instructions outlined below – a GIS-generated map or maps of the project area (pdf format only) with the project submission email.

- Make sure that the map layers can be turned on / off / are editable.
- Make sure the map(s) fits on an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper.

Provide at least one map, preferably “portrait” orientation, with the project area / features as:

- a Point, e.g. culvert, bridge, etc.,
- a Line, e.g. fence, road, creek, etc., and/or
- a Polygon, e.g. stand boundaries, treatment areas, etc.
 - Do not use a point if treating an area, use a polygon.
 - Points/lines/polygons need to be distinct and easily found on the map.
 - The project area / site needs to be centered on the map, especially if only one area/feature.

Please use the Forest Visitor Map as your map’s base layer.

- Do not add contour lines to the FV map unless needed for clarifying the proposed action. Contour lines can make the map difficult to read.
 - If contour lines are needed, make sure they are distinguishable from other linear features such as roads, trails, streams, etc.
- A topo map can be substituted for the FV map. If using a topo map but the contour lines are not important the topo lines should be light gray or opaque.
- Regardless of base map, make sure there are identifiable elements, e.g. towns, roads, streams, etc. on the map to help locate the project area on the landscape and that the elements are clearly labeled.

The preferred map scale (typically 1:24K) is whatever scale best presents the project area’s location and proposed activities:

- If the 1:24K scale is too small (i.e. the project feature(s) – point/line/polygon – would be hard to find or would be indistinguishable on just one map), use a larger scale to show the overall project area (coarse scale map) and smaller scaled maps to show the project features (fine scale map).
- If the 1:24K scale is too big (i.e. the project feature is a tiny point or thin line lost/hard to find on the larger landscape), use a smaller scale to highlight the feature while ensuring there are elements on the map to identify the project’s location.
- If you need to make additional maps, please make as few as possible.

At a minimum, all maps should include (with the preferred but not set in stone location on the map):

- a Title (project name and district name only (please); centered at top)
- a Legend (features clearly labeled; lower right corner)
- a Scale (in half mile, e.g. 0__0.25__0.5 miles, or full miles, e.g. 0__0.25__0.5__1.0 miles; lower left corner)
- a North Arrow (upper right corner)
 - Display all of the above in boxes with black outlines and a white backgrounds (not gray or yellow)
 - Do not ‘Halo’ the text or numbers or anything else on the map. Please.
 - The Scale needs to be large enough to read the numbers.

Finally, please include the mapmakers name and the date it was created on the map.

The Map(s) you provide will be used for Scoping the Public and the Tribes and in the Decision document. Please make sure they show – clearly, effectively, and professionally – what activity or activities are being proposed and where they are located on the Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forests.

SHAPEFILES

The resource specialists require the shapefile(s) of the project's proposed activities before they will conduct their analyses. Providing the shapefile does not substitute for providing a pdf map.

The Project Proponent needs to send the shapefile, or a location where the shapefile can be found, to the Small NEPA Planner (currently: jjchynoweth@fs.fed.us) by the time or shortly after the District Ranger submits this form.

- Shapefiles need to include the Project Name and have the Feature (culvert, bridge, etc.) labeled.
- Shapefiles need to include the following extensions – .dbf, .prj, .sbn, .shp, .shx, and .xml.

Projects in Roadless Area

<p>What is the Inventoried Roadless Area name? Silver Creek – Pilot Knob</p> <p><i>O:\NFS\NezPerceClearwater\Project\MultiBasin\Planning\Small_NEPA_Cat_Ex\Reference Material\Roadless Rule Info</i></p>	<p><u>Forest Plan IRA Name (if different):</u></p>
<p>Identify the Idaho Roadless Management Classification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Wild Land Recreation</i> • <i>Special Areas of Historic or Tribal Significance</i> • <i>Primitive</i> • <i>Backcountry Restoration</i> • <i>General Forest, Rangeland and Grassland</i> 	<p>Classification(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Special Areas of Historic or Tribal Significance</i>
<p>Does the project involve constructing or reconstructing roads? Yes* No</p> <p>* If yes, see http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title36-vol2 then navigate to Subpart C 294.23</p>	
<p>Does the project involve cutting trees? Yes* No</p> <p>* If yes, see http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title36-vol2 then navigate to Subpart C 294.24</p>	
<p>Does the project involve removing minerals, including common variety minerals? Yes* No</p> <p>* If yes, see http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title36-vol2 then navigate to Subpart C 294.25</p>	

JC : 9/16/2019

1/9/2020

Additional Information:

Newsome Fuels Activity Table

Location Name	Unit #	Acres	Roadless	RHCA	Treatment
Mud Springs	1	10	No	No	Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles
440 A	2	7	No	No	Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles
440 A	3	9	No	Yes	Handthin <8" DBH @ 16' Spacing / Prune all 8' / Delimb Downfall / Pile slash material / Burn Piles
440 A	4	31	No	No	Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles
440 A	5	0	No	Yes	Handthin <8" DBH @ 16' Spacing / Prune all 8' / Delimb Downfall / Pile slash material / Burn Piles
440 A	6	10	No	Yes	Handthin <8" DBH @ 16' Spacing / Prune all 8' / Delimb Downfall / Pile slash material / Burn Piles
440 A	7	11	No	No	Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles
440 A	8	8	No	Yes	Handthin <8" DBH @ 16' Spacing / Prune all 8' / Delimb Downfall / Pile slash material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	9	6	No	No	Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	10	9	No	Yes	Handthin <8" DBH @ 16' Spacing / Prune all 8' / Delimb Downfall / Pile slash material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	11	8	No	No	Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	12	16	No	Yes	Handthin <8" DBH @ 16' Spacing / Prune all 8' / Delimb Downfall / Pile slash material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	13	22	No	No	Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	14	2	Yes	No	Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	15	4	Yes	Yes	Handthin <8" DBH @ 16' Spacing / Prune all 8' / Delimb Downfall / Pile slash material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	16	4	Yes	No	Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	17	3	Yes	Yes	Handthin <8" DBH @ 16' Spacing / Prune all 8' / Delimb Downfall / Pile slash material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	18	43	Yes	No	Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	19	8	Yes	Yes	Handthin <8" DBH @ 16' Spacing / Prune all 8' / Delimb Downfall / Pile slash material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	20	6	Yes	No	Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles
Newsome Townsite	21	3	Yes	Yes	Handthin <8" DBH @ 16' Spacing / Prune all 8' / Delimb Downfall / Pile slash material / Burn Piles
Total		219			

Totals	Non Roadless Acres	Total Acres
RHCA	51	69
Non RHCA	95	150

Roadless Acres	
RHCA	18
Non RHCA	55
Total	73

Percent Roadless	33%
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Sum of Acres	Column Labels		
Row Labels	No	Yes	Grand Total
Handthin <6"DBH / Prune all 8' / delimb Downfall / Pile slashed material / Burn Piles	95	55	150
Handthin <8" DBH @ 16' Spacing / Prune all 8' / Delimb Downfall / Pile slash material / Burn Piles	51	18	69
Grand Total	146	73	219

More Additional Information:

The Newsome Creek Defensible Space Project Decision Memo was signed on 10/23/03. This consisted of hand thinning within 200 linear feet from structures and outbuilding. The work was completed within RHCA. This project only treated small areas of Forest Service land and does not meet the purpose and need of the new project proposed. (SEE BELOW FOR DECISION)

DECISION MEMO

Newsome Creek Defensible Space Project

USDA Forest Service
Nez Perce National Forest
Red River Ranger District
Idaho County, Idaho

Decision

I have reviewed the project file and decided to treat vegetative fuels on National Forest System-administered lands in the Newsome Creek watershed. Treatments will occur in the near proximity (up to 200 feet linear distance) of structures such as homes, outbuildings and administrative facilities. This decision will improve human safety and reduce impacts to forest resources and threat to private property from wildland fire in the treatment area. This project will create defensible space where federal, state, and local volunteer firefighters may undertake fire suppression activities in the event of fire. The intent is to maintain these defensible space areas into the future.

Twelve sites ranging in size from less than one-half acre to three acres have been selected for treatment. These sites are located along Forest Service Roads 1858, 471, and 464. The locations are: T29N, R7E, Sections 1; T30N, R7E, Sections 30 and 31; and T31N, R6E, Section 24 (Boise Meridian). Total acreage affected by these activities will be less than 13 acres. A few sites are located in riparian areas with structures and/or roads between streams and the vegetation to be treated. No new roads will be constructed and no road reconstruction will occur for this project.

As part of the decision the following actions will occur:

- Fuel reduction will be accomplished by pruning limbs to a maximum height of 18 feet above the ground, thinning trees to a maximum of a 10-feet by 10-feet crown spacing, and removing brush and sapling trees.
- Some trees may be removed where they pose a safety hazard. An example would be a dead or dying tree leaning toward and capable of striking a structure. These will be evaluated on an individual basis.
- Thinned materials may be reduced by piling and burning, chipping, or scattering if concentrated material constitutes a fuel or safety hazard. Some material may be reserved for administrative uses.
- Some treated material may be left on the ground to provide soil stability, carbon sequestration, nutrient sources and habitat for dependent wildlife and plant species.
- Maintenance treatments will be scheduled, if warranted, after monitoring fuels at periodic intervals.

Mitigation Measures

As a part of the decision the following mitigation measures will occur:

- After piles are burned, locations will be monitored and may be planted with native plant species to minimize weed invasion and prevent erosion. Periodic monitoring will determine the need for maintenance of the treated sites.
- Periodic monitoring of fuels will be conducted at five- to ten-year intervals to determine if maintenance treatments are needed..
- Any trees with obvious large stick nests or cavities will be evaluated by a wildlife biologist to determine if the tree should be retained or if other management action needs to occur.
- Existing snags and large down wood will be left on-site as long as doing so is consistent with public and firefighter safety.
- If previously unknown cultural sites or artifacts are discovered during implementation, any ground disturbing activities will be stopped until those materials can be properly documented and evaluated by the Forest Archaeologist.
- Habitat exists for four Nez Perce National Forest sensitive plant species within the project area. None of the four species were found growing in the project area or adjacent vicinity. Map any sensitive plants found during implementation and consult with a botanist for protocol. Monitor following completion to spot check for sensitive plants.

The following mitigation measures will incrementally improve riparian function and minimize adverse impacts on water quality and fish habitat:

- Any trees to be cut that are capable of reaching a stream (sites 2 and 5) will be felled in the direction of the stream to add woody debris for fish cover and other aquatic needs.
- Ten of the twelve sites to be treated are located partially or entirely within the Newsome Creek Riparian Conservation area (RHCA) and the RHCAs of smaller tributaries and have the potential to affect Large Woody Debris (LWD).
- A fisheries biologist or hydrologist along with a fire specialist will mark all trees needing to be dropped at sites 2 and 5 that are capable of reaching a stream. The purpose of this is to insure the fallers know specifically which trees are to be dropped into channels.
- A fire specialist and either a fisheries biologist, hydrologist, one of their technicians, or an employee given instruction by a fisheries biologist or hydrologist will work together to drop trees in a manner appropriate to best meet fish cover and channel concerns at sites 2 and 5.
- Work around wetland locations will be conducted so as to minimize disturbance of riparian ground cover and vegetation, and maintain wetland function. Wetlands within the areas to be treated have been identified, but an ecology, fire, range, or hydrology specialist will help implementation crew leaders identify these features in the field.

- Activities will be done in a way that minimizes sediment production and delivery to streams and wetlands. Treatment locations, methods, and season of operation will be selected to be compatible with this objective.
- At locations where pile burning is to occur, fire personnel will evaluate the burn pile positions on a site-by-site basis for erosion potential (any questionable areas would be relayed to a hydrologist or fisheries biologist or one of their technicians). Where slope and ground cover conditions on the downhill side of burn piles could result in sediment delivery to streams, preventative measures will be taken. This is not expected to be necessary in most cases because the vast majority of the project sites are on gently sloping to flat ground. These measures will include placing debris, digging a small cup trench with hand tools, or similar measures to prevent sediment delivery to streams.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for this project is to treat vegetation near structures such as homes and facilities where it currently poses a risk to human safety and property should fire occur in those areas. This project will reduce the fuel hazard in these areas, and create safer areas where federal, state, and volunteer firefighters may undertake fire suppression activities to protect private property and forest resources in the event of fire.

Scoping and Public Involvement

Scoping was initiated with a legal notice soliciting public comments published in the *Lewiston Morning Tribune* on December 16, 2002. Approximately 187 scoping letters were mailed out to interested individuals, local interest groups and other federal, state and local agencies. Seven responses were received. All comments received were supportive of fuels reduction activities, though size of the treatment areas, utilization of material, effects to other resources and monitoring were issues raised by the public.

Reasons for Categorical Exclusion

This project falls under Category 6, in section 31.2 (6) of the Forest Service Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook 1909.15. Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities, which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction (Service level D, FSH 7709.56). Based on an environmental analysis, the effects of implementing this action will be of limited context and intensity and will result in little or no environmental effects to either the physical or biological components of the environment.

It is my determination that this activity will be of limited size, duration and degree of disturbance. I find that this proposed action qualifies under the provisions of the Environmental Policy and Procedure Handbook (FSH 1909.15), WO amendment 1909.15-92-1, dated September 21, 1992.

Consideration of Extraordinary Circumstances

Analysis indicates there will be no significant effect on the following:

Steep slopes or highly erosive soils

The lands of the project area are generally high, rolling timbered terrain with meadows along some larger creeks and smaller tributaries. Soils are not generally susceptible to debris torrents, debris avalanches, dry ravel and rock-fall. Post-treatment monitoring and planting of native plant species will

be accomplished if necessary to assure that soils remain stable. There would be no increased potential for slope failures or expectation of destabilizing highly erodible soils.

Floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds

There are no municipal watersheds within the project area. Some treatments would occur near wetlands and on floodplains. Although the project is designed to reduce fuels, floodplain and wetland function would be maintained.

Threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat

A “Not Likely to Adversely Effect” determination was made for lynx, a “No Effect” determination was made for bald eagle, and a “Not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species or result in destructive or adverse modification of proposed critical habitat” determination was made for the gray wolf.

A “Not Likely to Adversely Effect” determination was made for bull trout and steelhead. A “No Effect” determination was made for fall Chinook salmon.

A “No Effect” determination was made for four sensitive plants, Macfarlane’s four-o’clock (*Mirabilis macfarlanei*), water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*), Ute’s lady-tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) and Spaldings catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*).

Congressionally designated areas such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas or National Recreation Areas

The proposed action is not within a congressionally designated area. No effects to congressionally designated areas will occur.

Research Natural Areas

The proposed action is not within a Research Natural Area. No effects to Research Natural Areas will occur.

Inventoried Roadless Areas

The proposed action is not within an Inventoried Roadless Area. No effects to Inventoried Roadless Areas will occur.

Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas

Archaeological surveys were conducted, and 2 cultural sites were located within the project area. If additional cultural resource properties are discovered during the project operations, in compliance with 36 CFR 8090.11, all ground disturbing activities will be halted until such cultural materials can be properly documented and evaluated by the Forest Heritage Resource Specialist. Therefore, there will be no adverse effects to cultural resources from project implementation.

Consistency with Forest Plan and Forest Service Policy

This project is consistent with the Nez Perce National Forest Plan (1986) goals (chapter II-2) and objectives (chapter II-3-5) to:

(13) "Protect resource values through cost-effective fire and fuels management, emphasizing fuel treatment through utilization of material and prescribed fire."

(16) "Protect Forest resources to allow for their safe and orderly use."

This project responds to priorities of the National Fire Plan, the Cohesive Strategy (Forest Service response to GAO Report GAO/RCED-99-65, October 2000), and the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy (August 2001) to reduce fuels in wildland-urban interface areas.

Findings Required by Other Laws

Consistency with the Endangered Species Act: This project is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act as discussed above.

Consistency with the National Forest Management Act: This project is consistent the National Forest Management Act. No activities in this project are related to timber harvest and there will no openings larger than 40 acres. Sensitive fish, plant and wildlife species are addressed in the project file. The project incorporates design criteria for sensitive species to ensure their viability throughout their range on National Forest Lands and to ensure they do not become federally listed as threatened or endangered.

Species Viability (36 CFR 219.20): The project, implemented in combination with and within the context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable future management actions in the analysis area, contributes toward maintaining viable populations of all native and desired non-native vertebrate species populations well distributed across the Forest (see project file).

Consistency with the Clean Water Act: Limiting ground-disturbing activities, coupled with use of the listed mitigation measures, are expected to make this project fully compliant with the Clean Water Act. Idaho State Water Quality Standards will not be exceeded by implementation of this project.

Consistency with Executive Order 11990 (Wetland Protection): Implementation of the project is not anticipated to adversely affect any wetlands in the project area. Adherence to the applicable mitigation measures documented in the Decision Memo would be applied to protect these areas.

Consistency with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Protection): Although some limited treatment may occur on floodplains with implementation of the project, floodplain function will not be significantly impacted. Treatments will be applied by hand. No alteration of landform will occur; floodplain function would not be improved, but would not be further degraded by this project.

Consistency with the Clean Air Act: Prescribed burning with this action would comply with the requirements of the Clean Air Act. This action is consistent with the Forest Plan standards and guides in that implementation would be in cooperation with Idaho Department of Health and Welfare by complying with the procedures outlined in the North Idaho Smoke Management Memorandum of Agreement.

Consistency with the National Historic Preservation Act: This project complies with the National Historic Preservation Act as discussed above. The survey report has been forwarded to the State Historic Preservation Office documenting the survey findings of no adverse effect on cultural properties.

Consistency with Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice): Implementation of this project is not anticipated to cause disproportionate adverse human health or environmental effects to minority or low income populations.

Consistency with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and Migratory Bird Conservation Executive Order 13186: The selected action is in compliance and alignment with both the MBTA and Executive Order 13186 which authorizes activities including habitat protection, restoration, enhancement, necessary modification and implementation of actions that benefit priority migratory bird species (Memorandum of Understanding Between USDA Forest Service and USDI Fish & Wildlife Service – 01-MU-11130117-028).

Administrative Review and Implementation

The project may be implemented immediately. This decision is not subject to appeal under the 36 CFR 215.8 (a) (4) and is not subject to the notice and comment period of 36 CFR 215.4.

The Project File is available for review at the Elk City Ranger Station, P.O. Box 416, Elk City, ID 83525. For further information regarding this decision, contact Tim Button at the above address, or at (208) 842-2245.

/s/Terry Nevius
TERRY NEVIUS
District Ranger

10/28/03
Date